

Soviet thrust at gulf is seen by Afghan

By Glenn Emery
WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF

The Soviet Union is preparing to make its final thrust toward the Persian Gulf by creating a new country in what is now southern Pakistan, a former colonel in Afghanistan's army said in an interview here.

The southwestern region of Pakistan — known as Baluchistan — will become the new focus of Soviet efforts to procure a warm water port in the strategic area of the gulf, predicted Ghulam Dastageer Wardak, who left the Afghan army shortly after the 1979 Soviet invasion of his country to lead a group of resistance fighters.

Wardak and his family now live in the Annapolis area. He was interviewed along with his two sons — Farooq and Waleed, who acted as his interpreters — at the Committee for a Free Afghanistan here.

"It's like the calm before the storm," said Wardak, who recently returned from a visit to Pakistan. "Right now, the area (Baluchistan) is extremely quiet. But that will change as soon as the Rus-

sians finish training Baluchistan rebels."

Wardak explained that about 8,000 people from the Baluchistan region had been sent to the Soviet Union for training in Marxist ideology and guerrilla warfare. Once they return home, they will begin a movement calling for independence from Pakistan.

An independent Baluchistan — with friendly ties to the Soviet-backed government of Babrak Karmal in Afghanistan — would provide the Russians with ready access to the oil-traffic lanes of the gulf without having to directly confront the pro-Western government of Pakistan.

Only direct Western intervention could persuade the Soviets to abandon the plan, Wardak said.

"We are fighting the entire Eastern bloc," Wardak said, asserting that the Russians were employing elite commando units from a number of Soviet client states.

"This is not a fight between Afghanistan and Russia. This is the fight between communism and the free world, and the mujihedeem (freedom

fighters) are the advance guard. The United States and every other free country should help us," he said.

U.S. officials have stated that one of the more serious roadblocks to getting help to the guerrillas was that rival factions were vying for the aid and had on occasion used their weapons against each other rather than against the Russians.

Wardak said unity between rival nationalists and fundamentalist Moslem groups had improved recently, but he urged that the nationalists be recognized by the West as the proper recipients of weapons, food and medical supplies.

The recent cease-fire between the Soviets and guerrillas in the Panjsher Valley became necessary, Wardak said, because the Russians had destroyed the food supply and were blocking the mouth of the valley with troops to prevent supplies from coming from the capital of Kabul, about 50 miles to the south.

"They agreed to a cease-fire, but only until August," he said. "I cannot conceive that the Afghan people would ever lay down their weapons against the Soviets."

Wardak said the guerrillas still control up to 85 percent of the countryside and that the cease-fire demonstrates that the Russians are not interested in controlling the Afghan people as much as they are in establishing a military base in the Persian Gulf.